

地獄の魔犬に奪われ
— Hell Hounds Steal Guitars —



俺と悪魔のブルース 4

4



平本アキラ

講文社

俺と悪魔のブルース



70年近くもの間、わずか29曲のブルースを録音しただけで、世を去った男がいた。

その後、数十年を経て、彼の名は伝説となり、残された楽曲は、あらゆる大衆音楽の源流となつた。
その男を知る者は皆、彼のことを、こう語した……

悪魔の一魄を失つた男



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666

円(税別)

定価: 本体

登場人物

- ジョン・アーヴィング……………本樹の主人
クラウス……………本樹の娘
ローラン……………本樹の孫
サザンズ……………本樹の孫
ナース……………本樹の孫
トマス……………本樹の孫
元保安官……………本樹の孫
元保安官の友人……………本樹の孫
元保安官助子見習い……………本樹の孫
ガルム／ラ・ブルー……………マクドナルドの孫たち
ジエラード……………マクドナルドの孫
サイタス……………マクドナルドの孫
ヴィーナス……………マクドナルドの孫
ショット・ヨコイントの黒人……………マクドナルドの孫
ロイ・ライシント……………白幕新聞記者、クラウドの従兄

AFFICHE NUMBER 34

俺と悪魔のブルーズ

平本アキラ



アラスター
No.467

俺と悪魔のブルーズ

4

地獄の狛犬に着れ

平本アキラ

4

The Hell Hound On My Trail

■ ■ ■





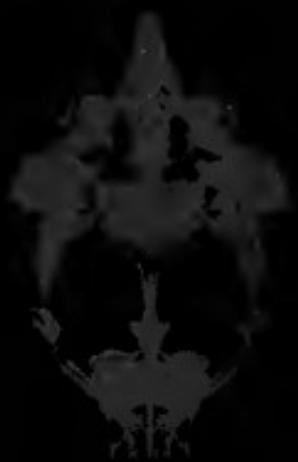




*H*e and the Devil Blues

Book Two
Part Two

Hell Hound on My Trail





Me and the Devil Blues

¶

Hell Hound on My Trail

Akira Hiramoto

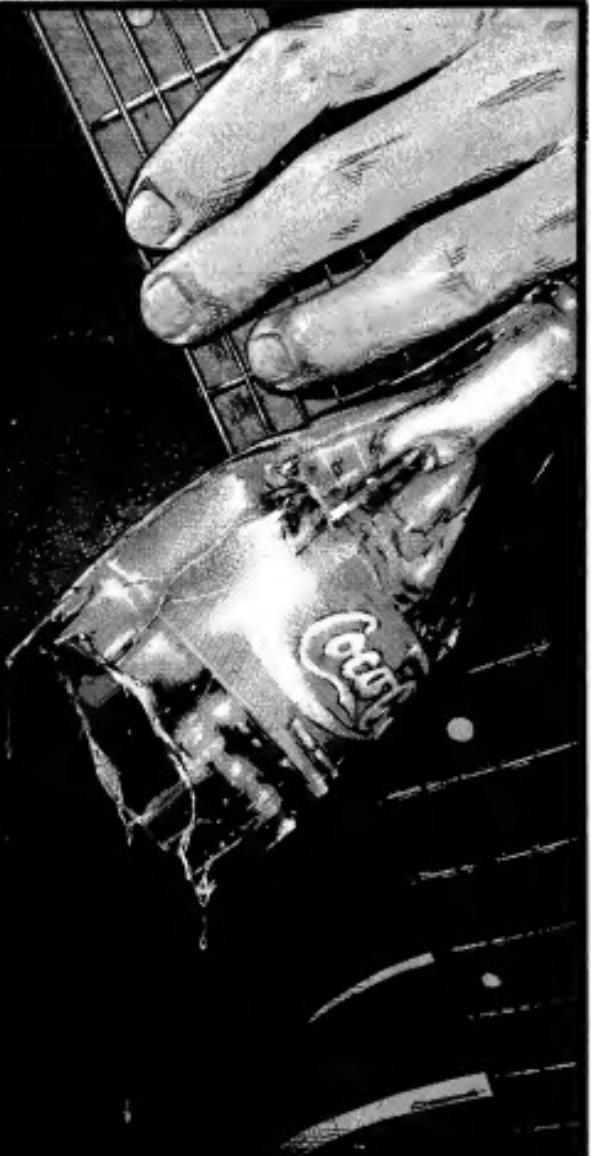
The 8. the Devil Blues

Volume 4 Hell Hound on My Trail
Akira Hiramatsu

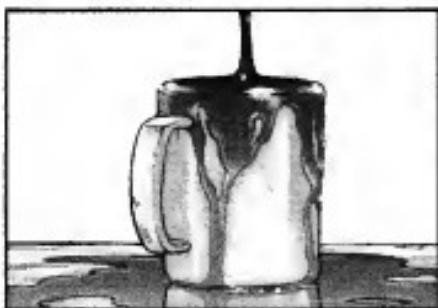
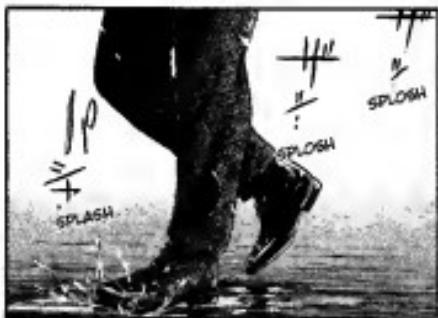
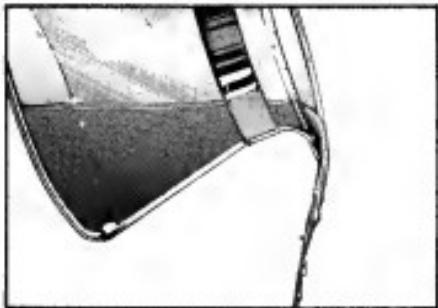
C o n t e n t s

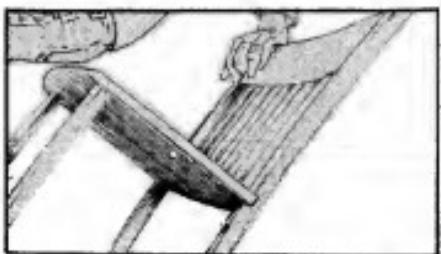
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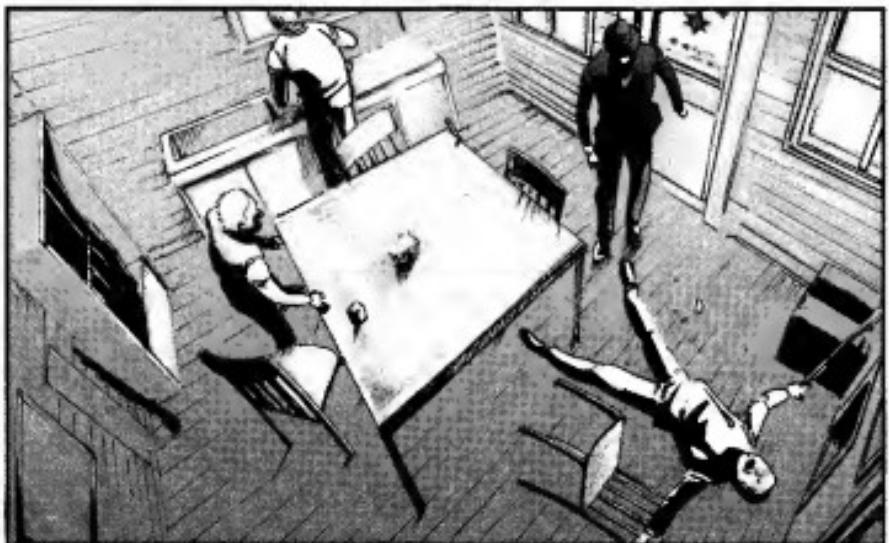


21/ If I Had Possession over Judgment Day, Part ⑦















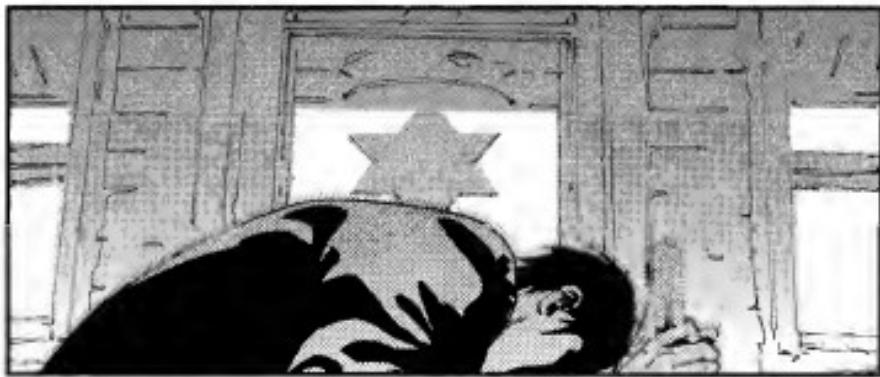
















Shit...once I saw their faces, there was no way I could hold back. What can I say...I was born hot blooded...

Hell...I'm in deep shit now. If I hadn't been able to take down all those guys I'da been dead meat...

Shit! Only one thing I can do...find RJ!

So much for all the free vittles. The hell'm I gonna do now?

Damn it...no way I can go back to McDonald's place now.

CLOP

CLOP

CLOP

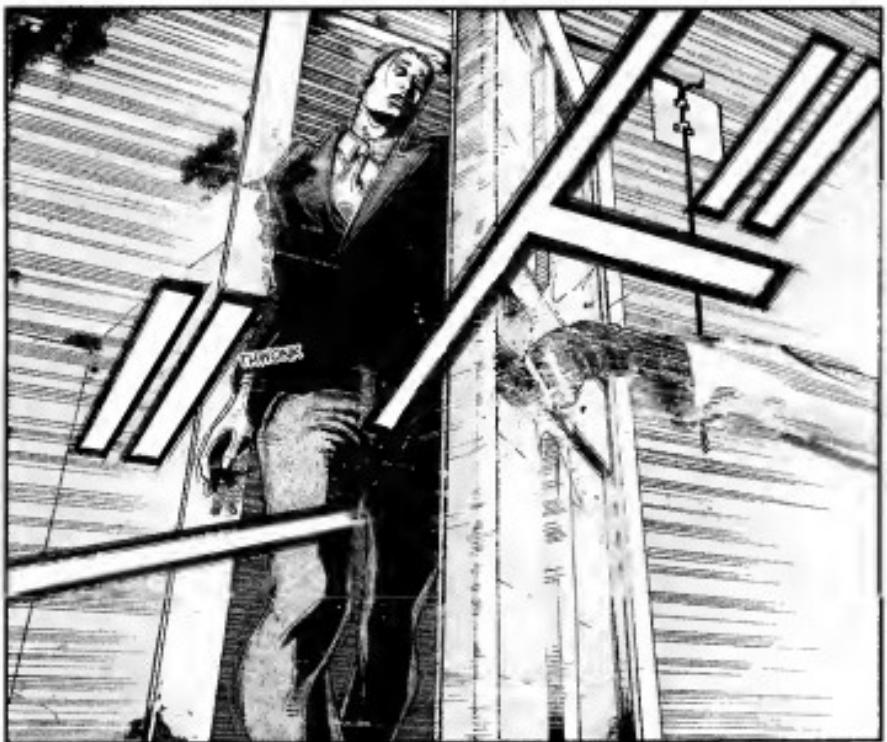
SHWACK

SHWACK



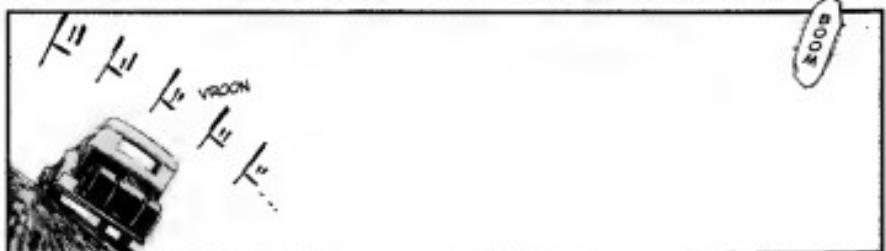




















Of all
the
guys to
show up
now...it
had to
be that
pesky
fuck?

S
H
I
T
...

THUD



P
A
T

P
A
T

F
U
C
K
!

Shit...we
were one
step
away...



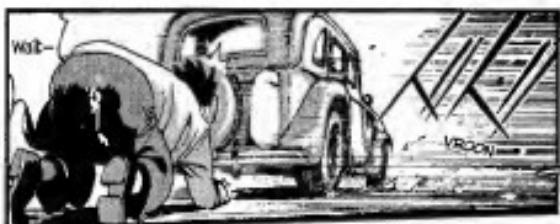
Where'd
he go?

Where
is he?













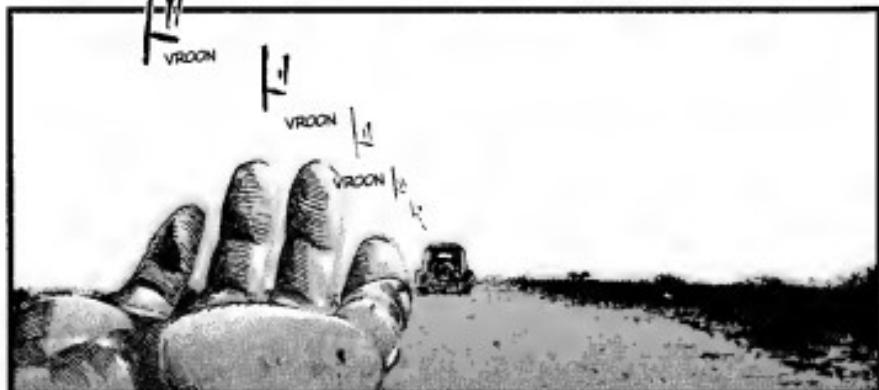
Wah ha ha ha ha ha ha







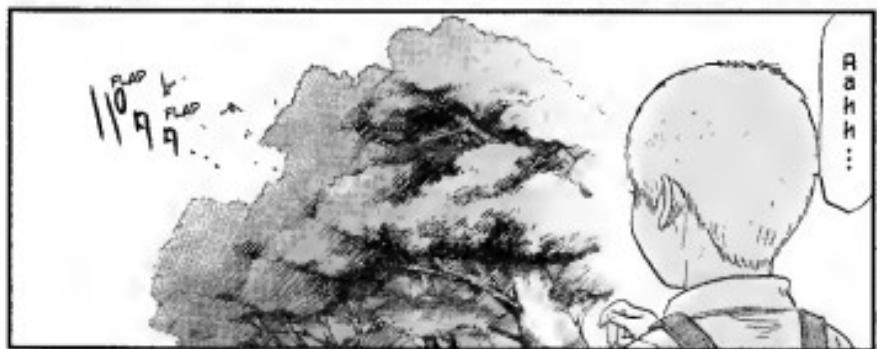
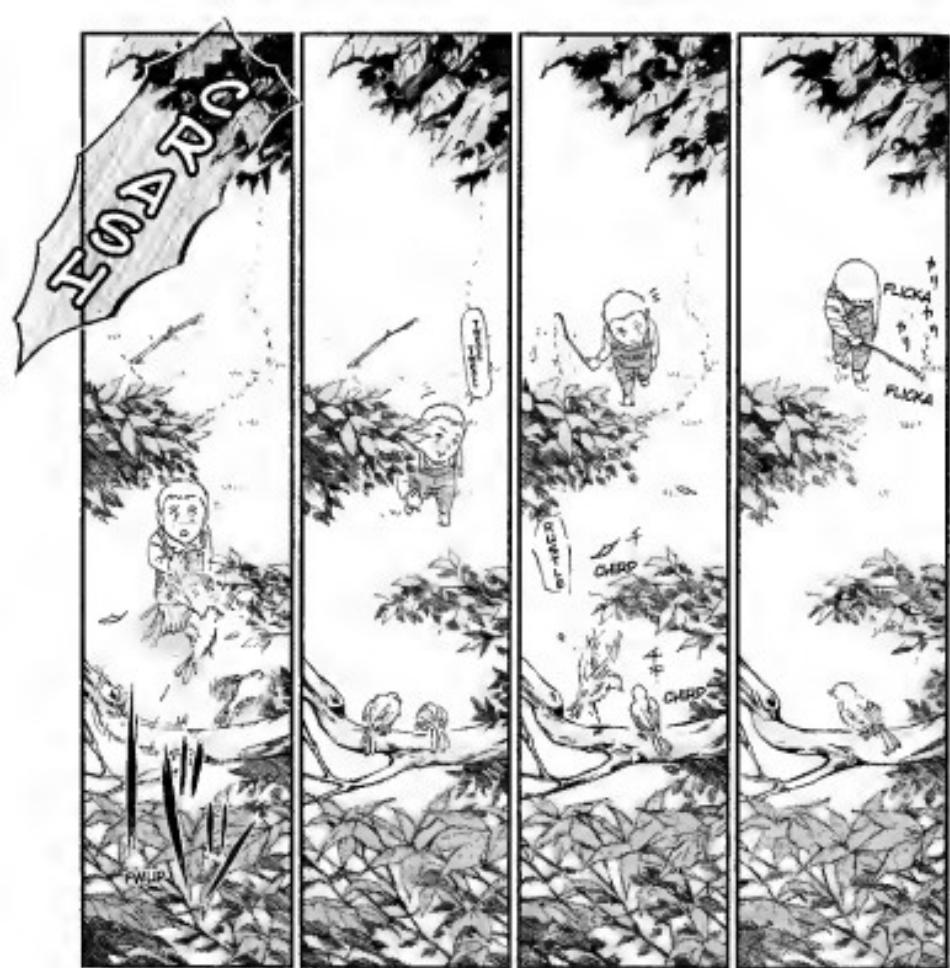
Well... Papa had to take over the sheriff's duties, so he's probably busy getting ready for tomorrow's lynching.

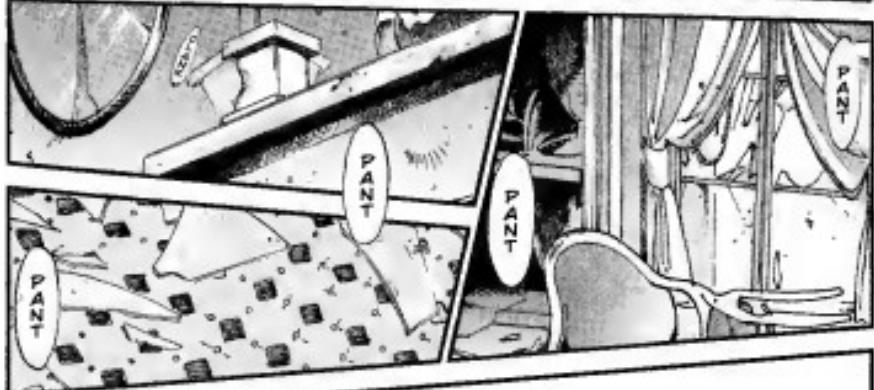


22/Hell Houndton Spy Trail Part 1









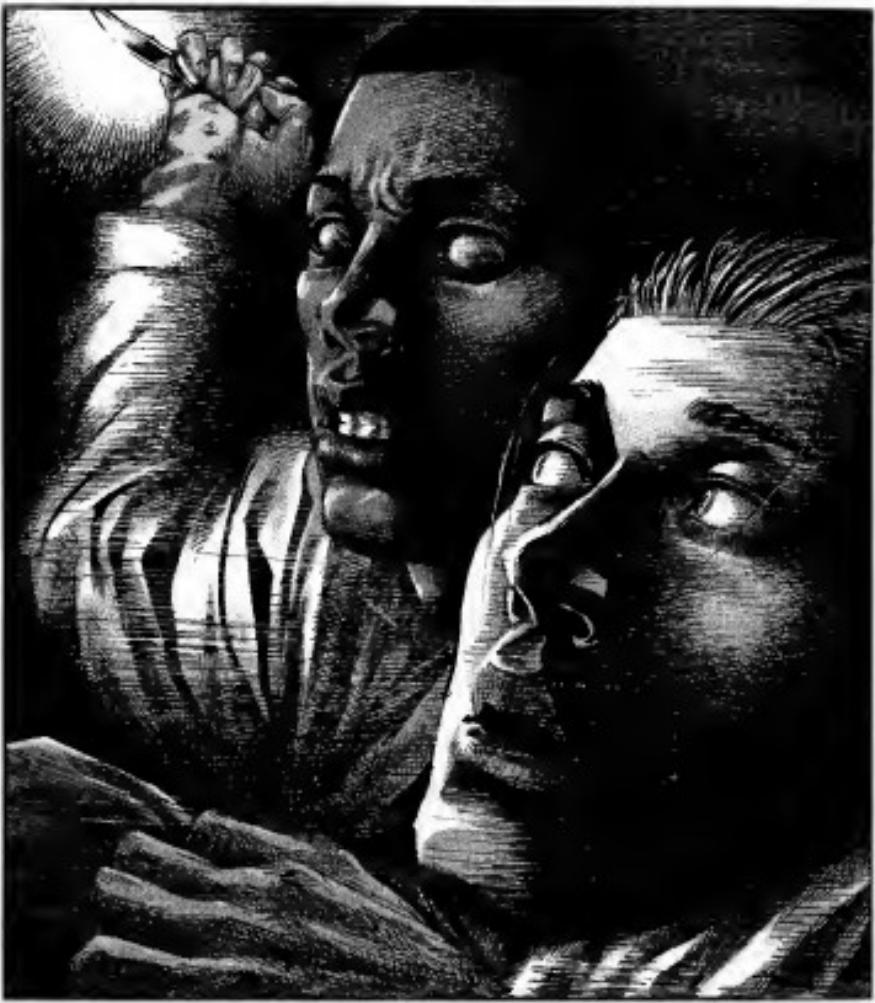




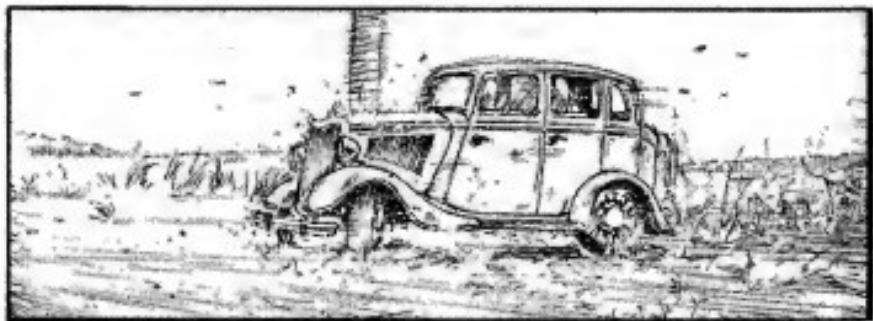
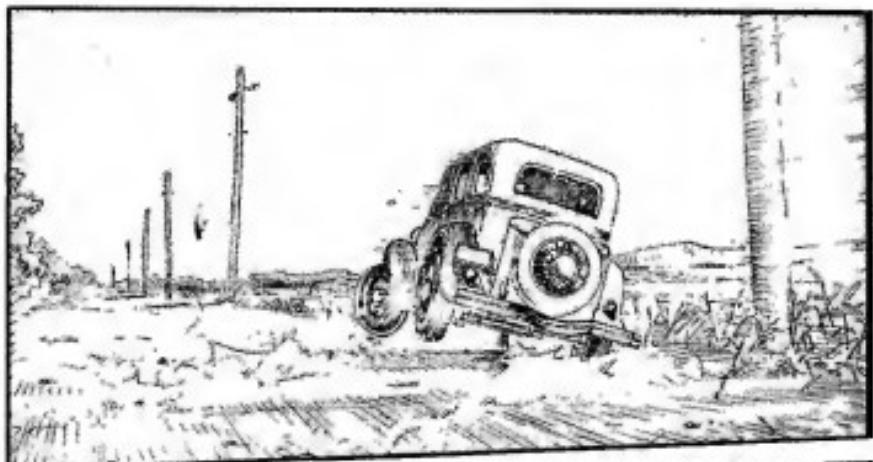
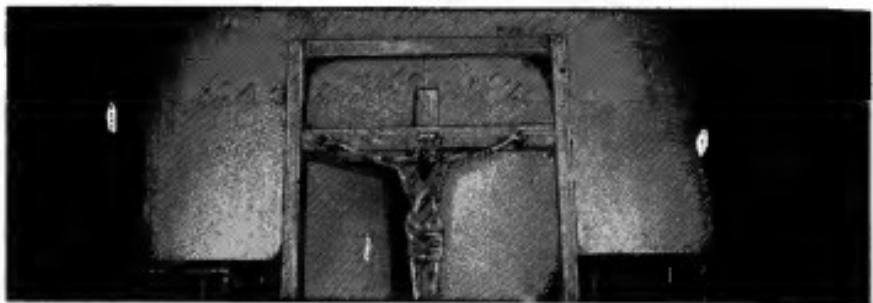


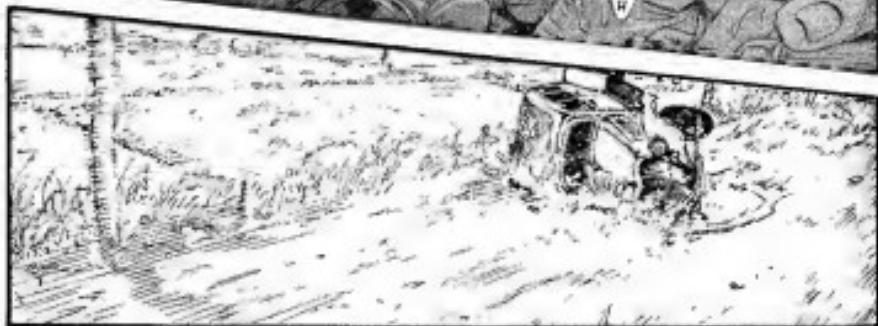
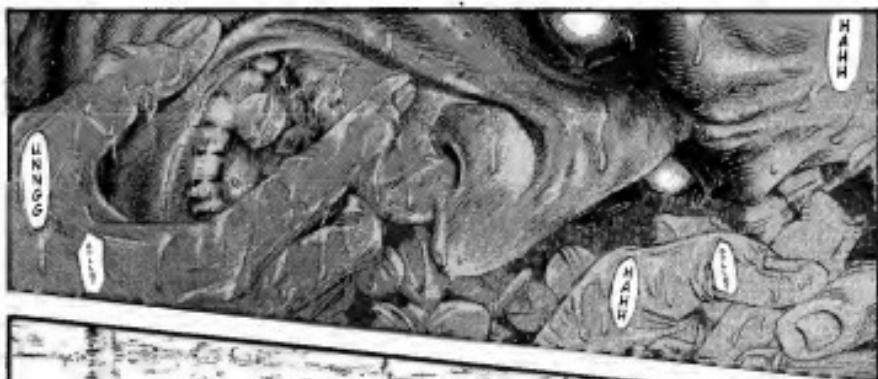




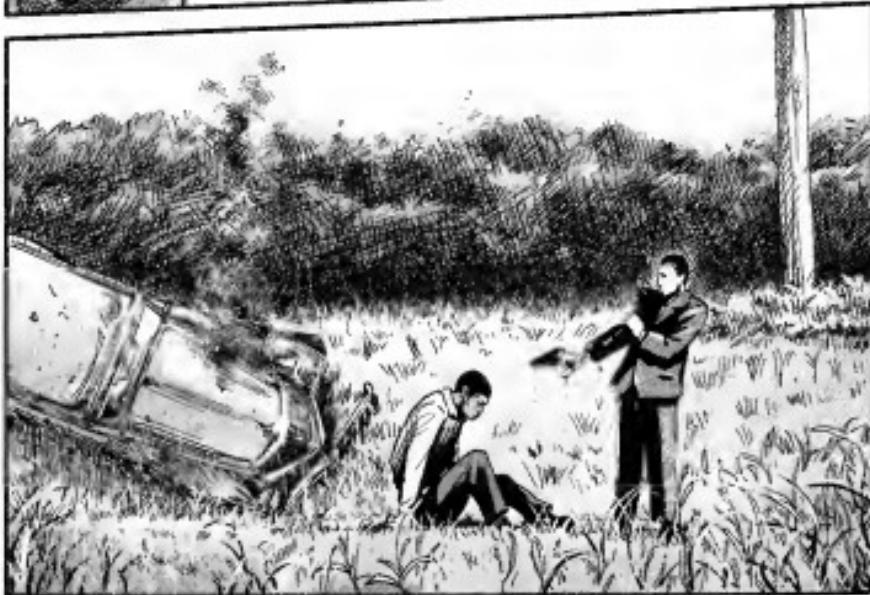




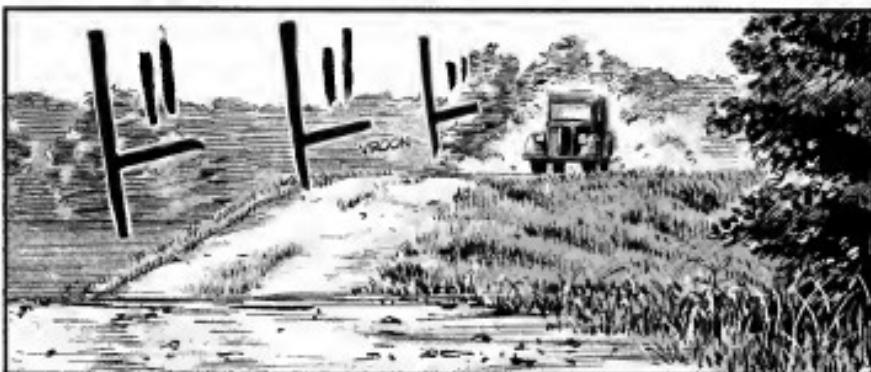


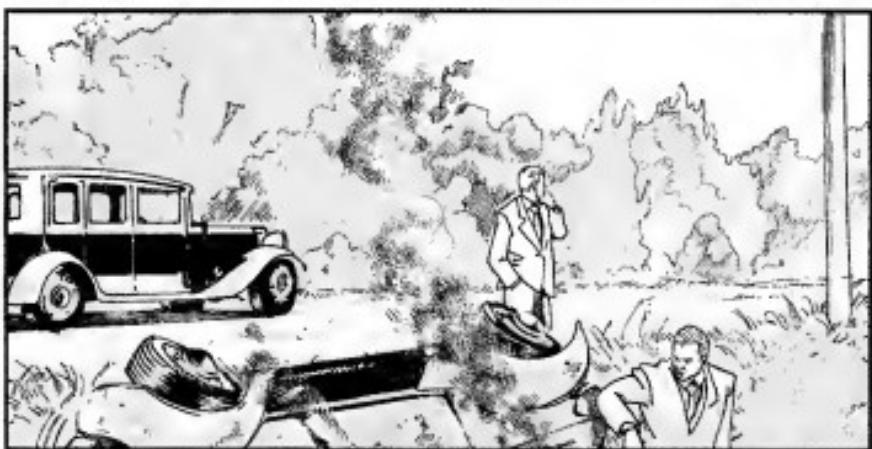












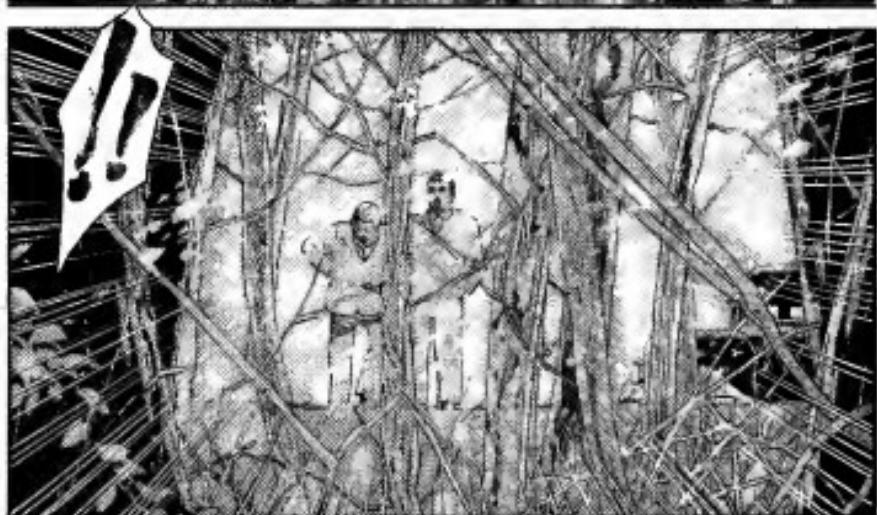




Me & Devil Blues

23/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part ②





















The only ones to blame are the outlaws who trampled upon every law our town holds dear. Your husband fought bravely, and now he needs you more than ever.



Your husband's fate was not your fault nor was it his own.



You have nothing to apologize for.



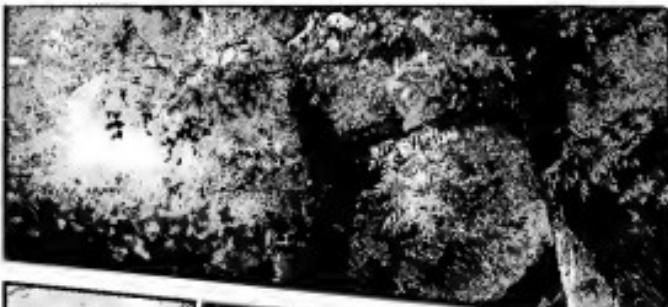














Why
didn't
you kill
him?



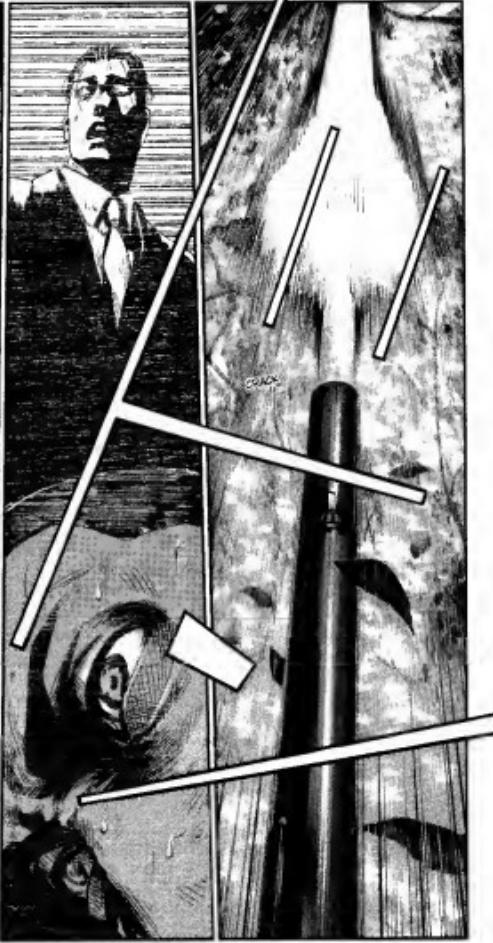
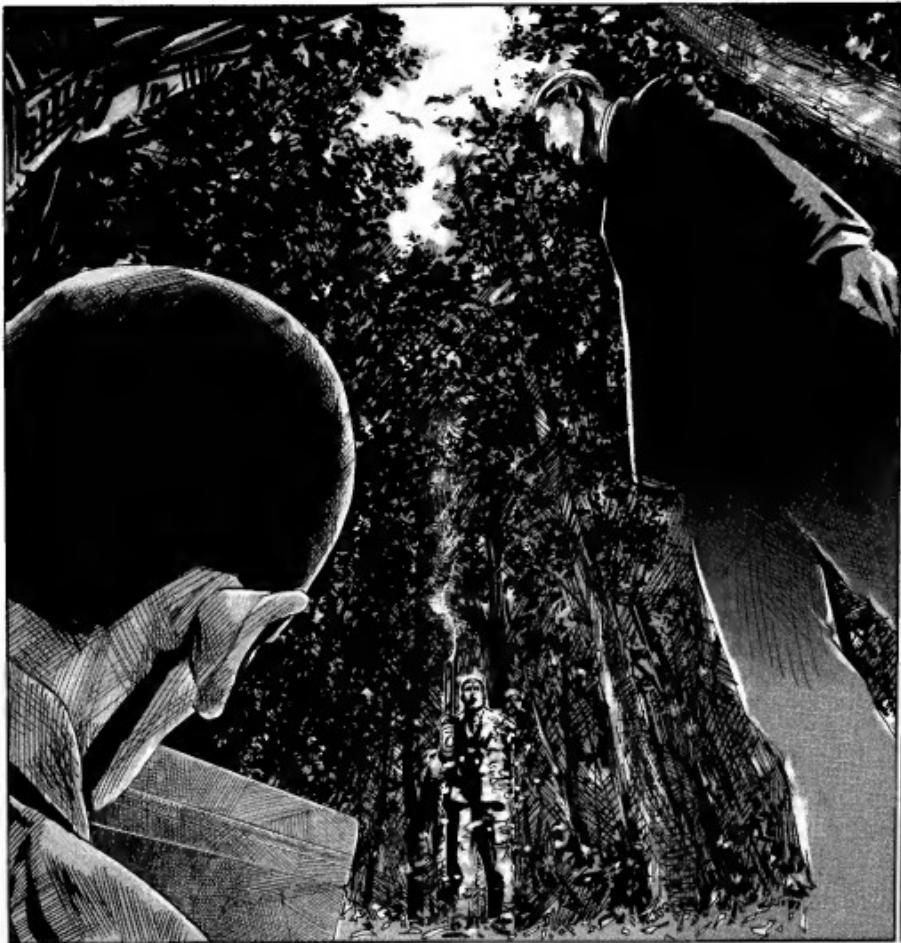












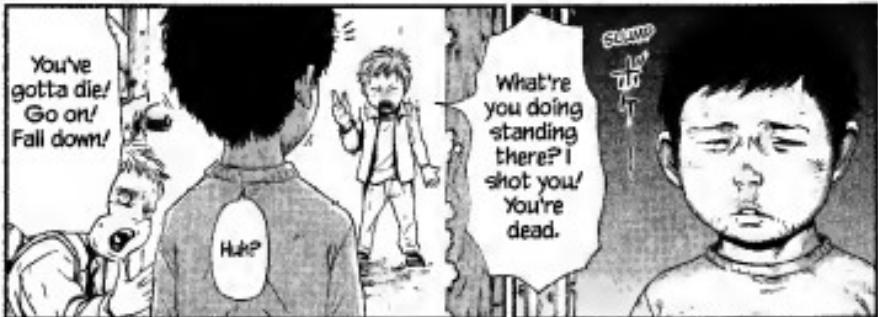
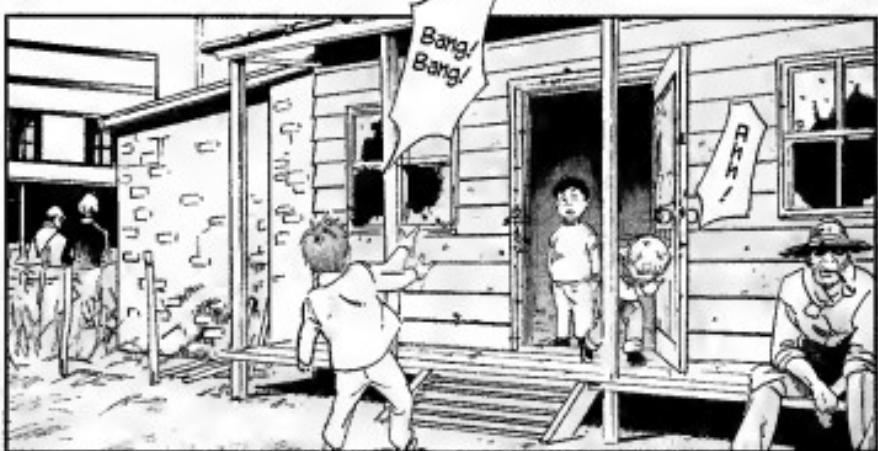
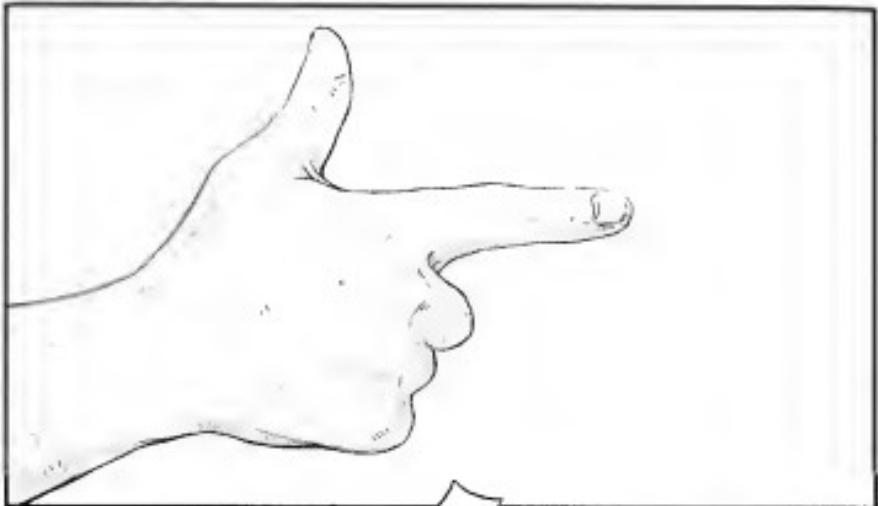


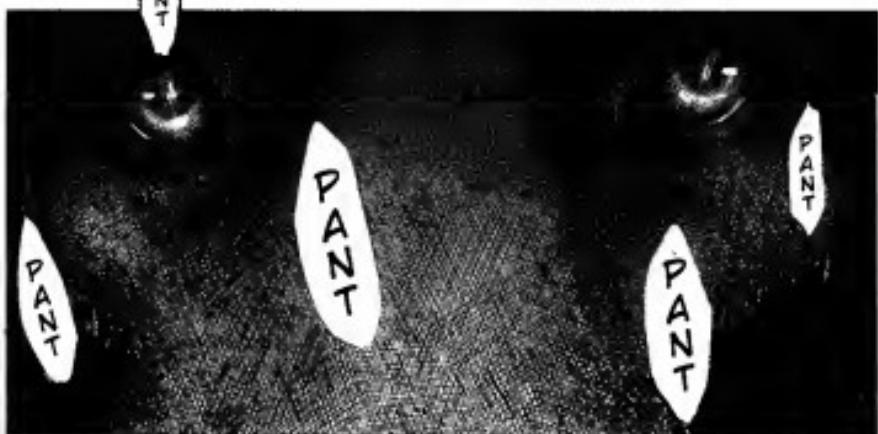
24/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part ③



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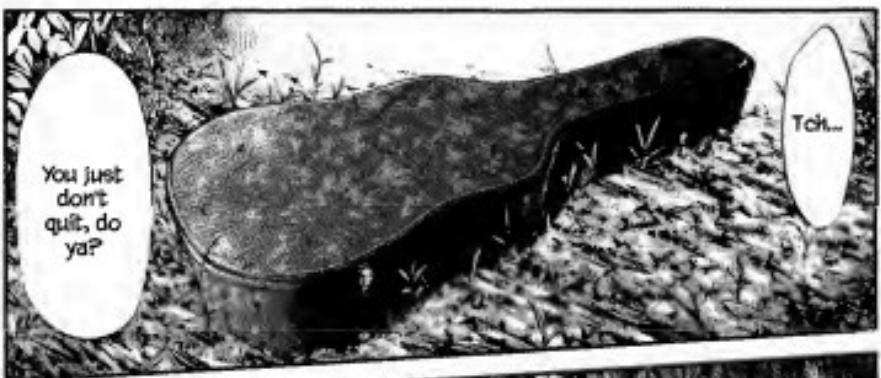
Mr. McDonald's servants turned blue the moment they heard his name.

They were mighty scared.

Yeah... Looks like Mr. McDonald tagged Mr. Golem and his boys for the manhunt...







It's sittin' right there! I know you see that guitar.

That's enough out of you, ya piece of shit!



Huh?
See
what?

You
see it.

GRRRR

Nope.





















If you
wanna
join your
friend with
his little...

Heh,
heh,
heh...





I-i didn't do nothin', mister! It was him...

What the hell am I supposed to do? Huh?



It was you! You lyin' cheat!

It was all Clyde!



Just play for him, R.J.

What's the nigger yelling about?



Maybe you just don't wanna play for a white man who's fixin' to lynch you?

Or...



Play even if you can't play! The man asked you to play! Now do it!



What? How the hell can I play?









Mr.
McDonald's
loyal servants
...the most
ferocious
and cunning
hunters that
ever lived.



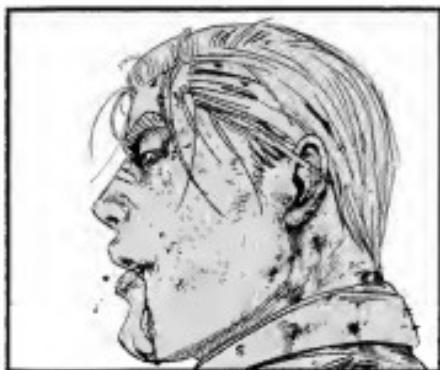


25/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part ④



Illustration by
John Cuneo
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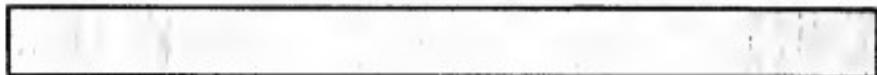


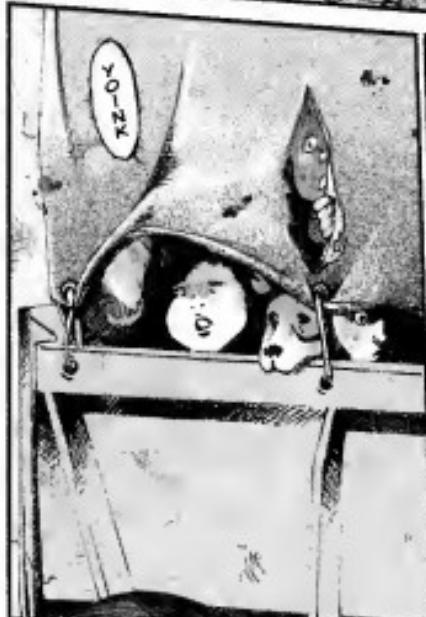




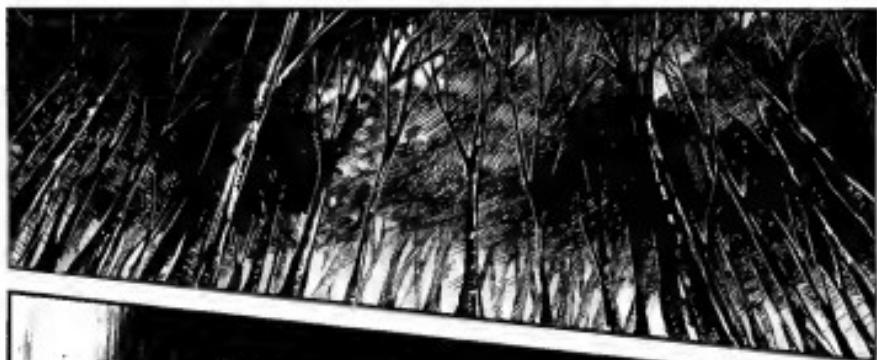














It was
just a cheap
piece-of-
shit guitar.
I'll buy you
a new one,
so quit your
whining.

Leave
it behind?
My guitar?

Huh?
Uh...had
to leave it
behind.



And that's not all.



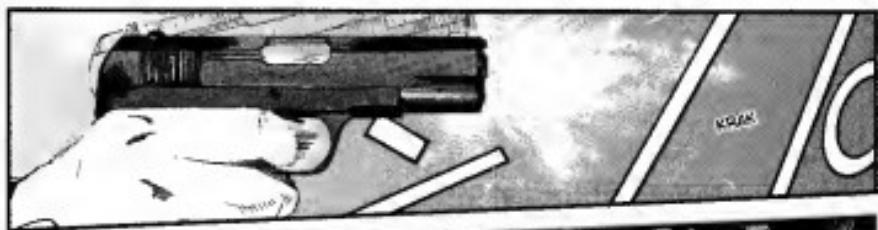
















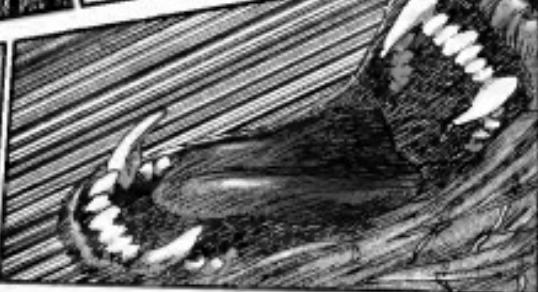


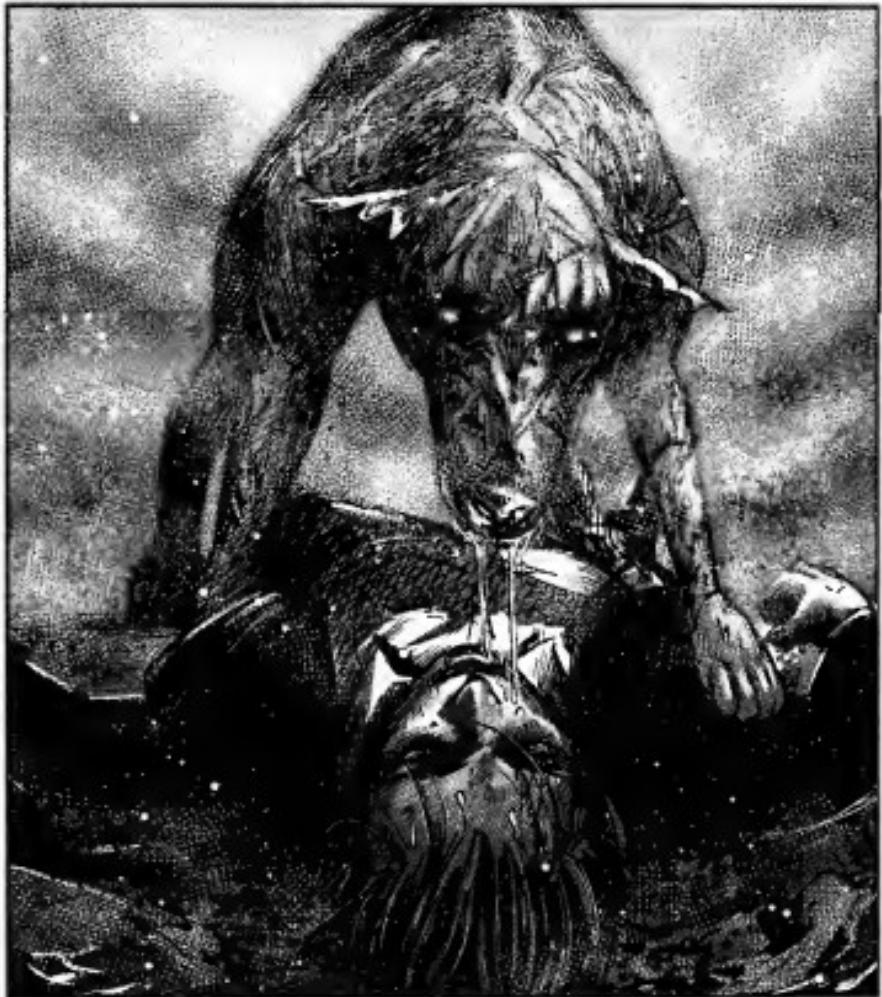
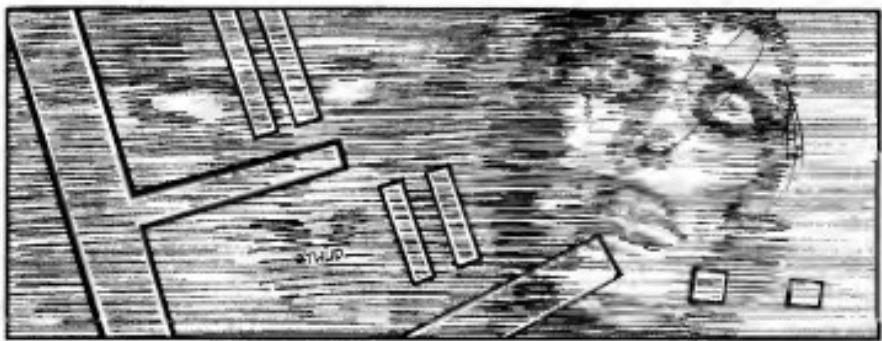
425



424



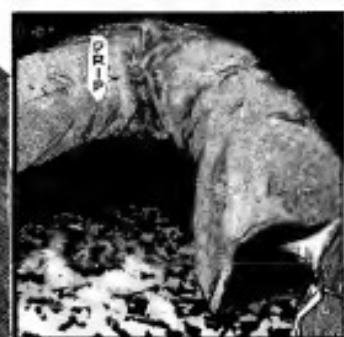




















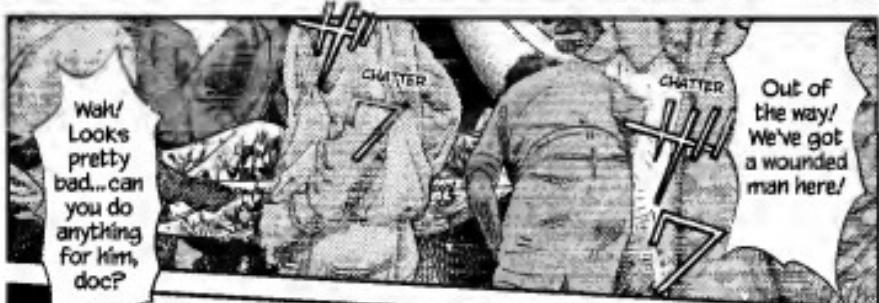
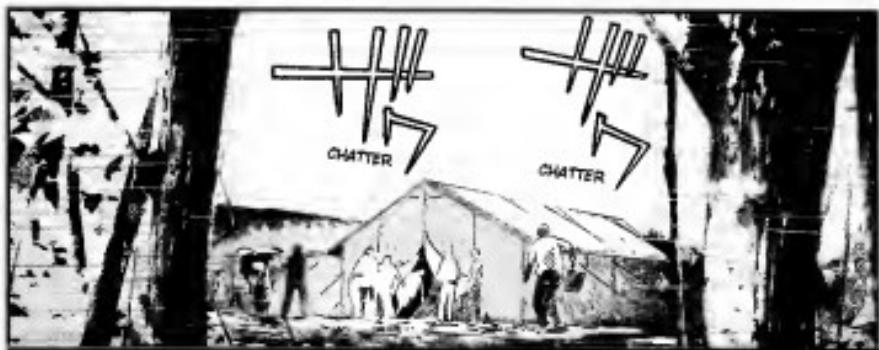
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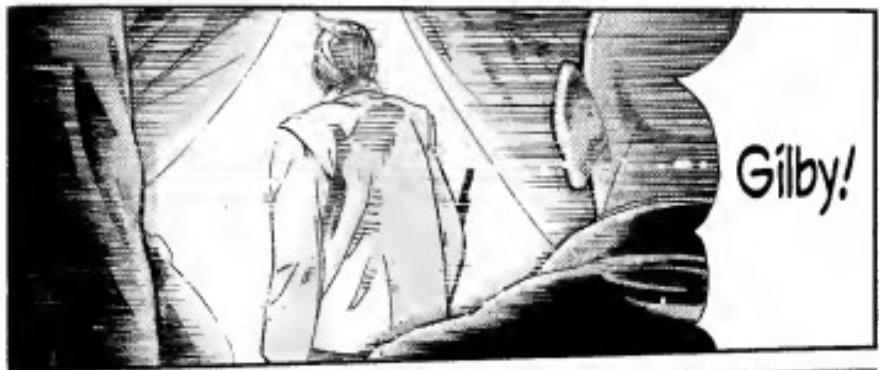


26/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part 5











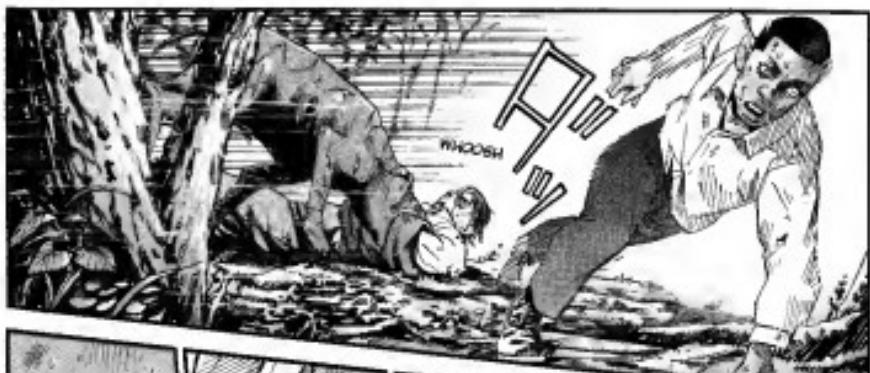


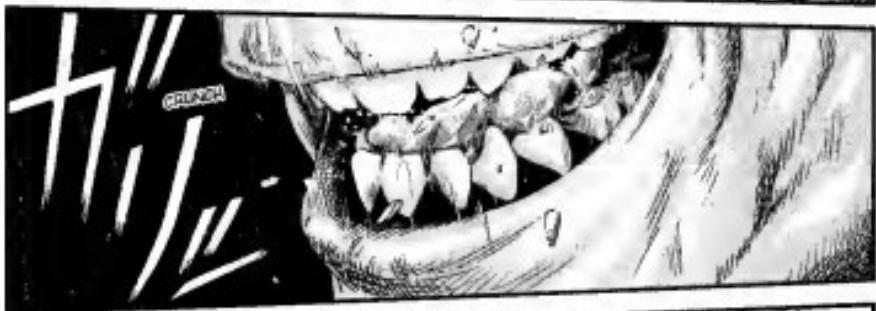






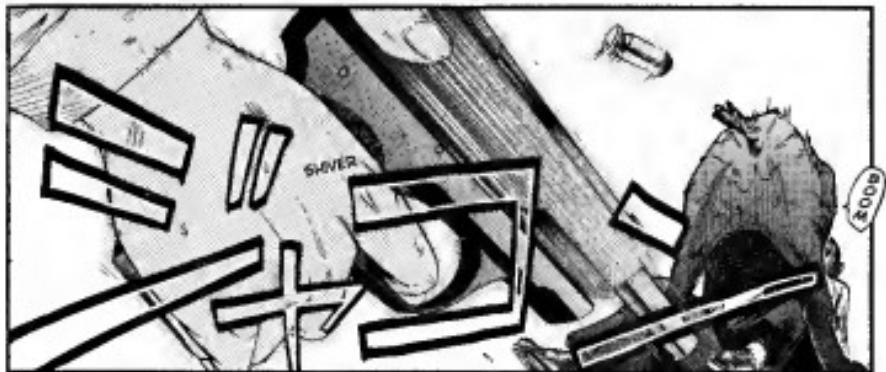
















If he tears his prey to pieces...



Yes...but Golem's one weakness is that he can't always control all that power.



We'll have nothing left for the lynching.





He's a
monster
:



And... looks
like he's...



...and those two will keep Golem under control.

They treat Golem like their little puppy. They're clearly superior when it comes to hunting...

We've also got Ferrilli and Nezheg :



He...



Golem's method of hunting is very primitive.

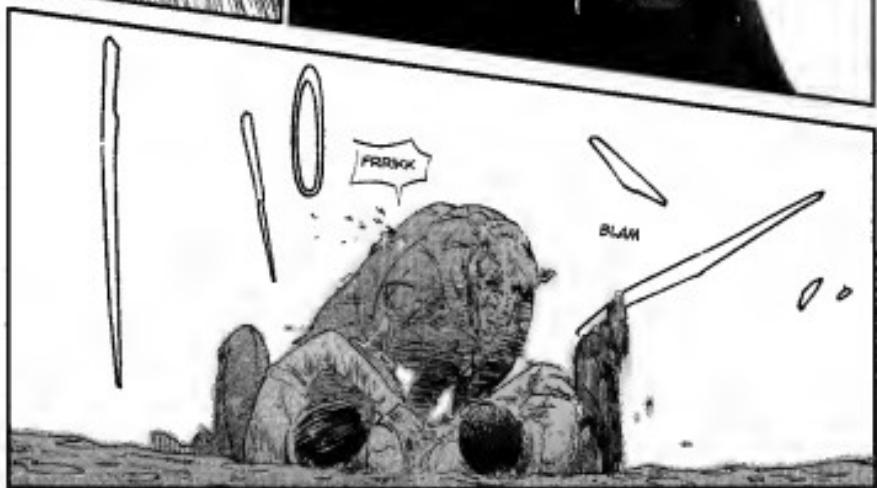
...and he destroys it.

...finds his prey...









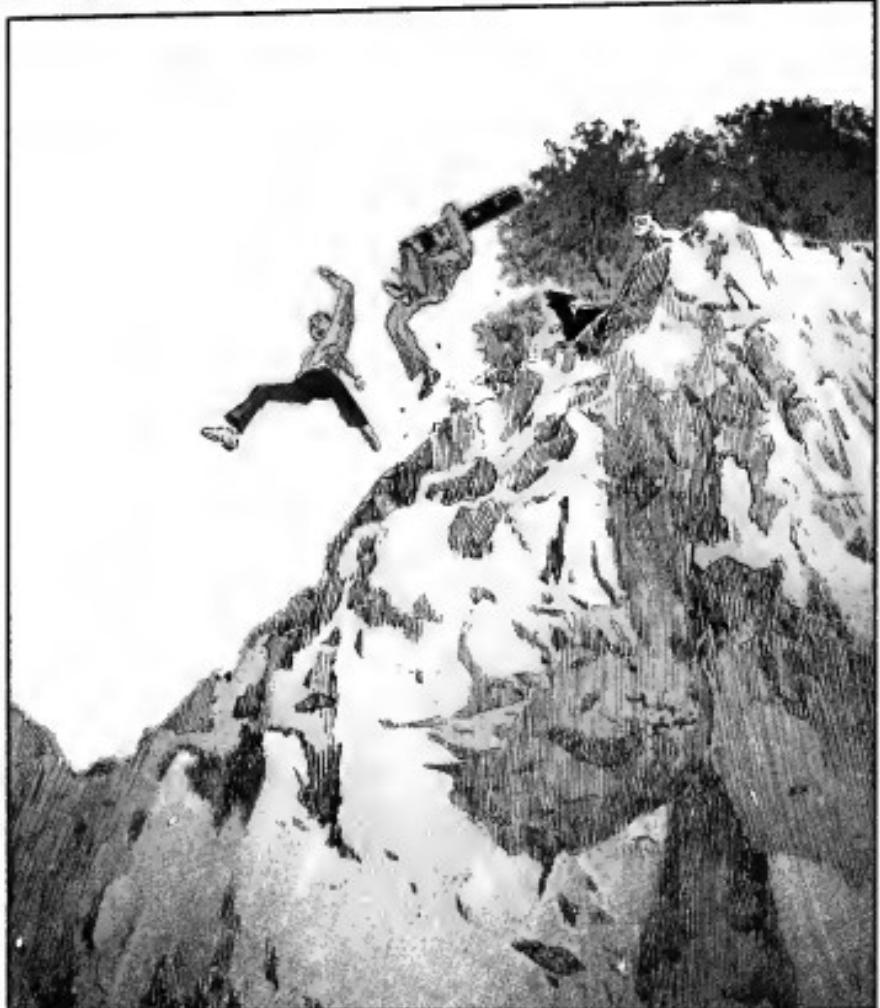












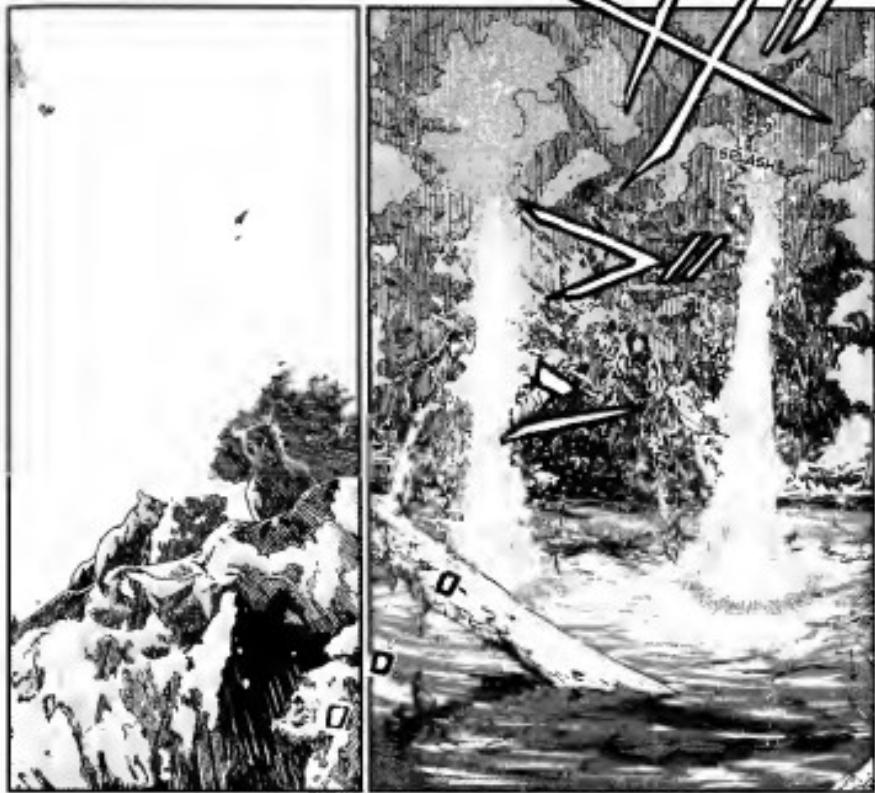
End of 26/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part ⑤



27/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part ⑥











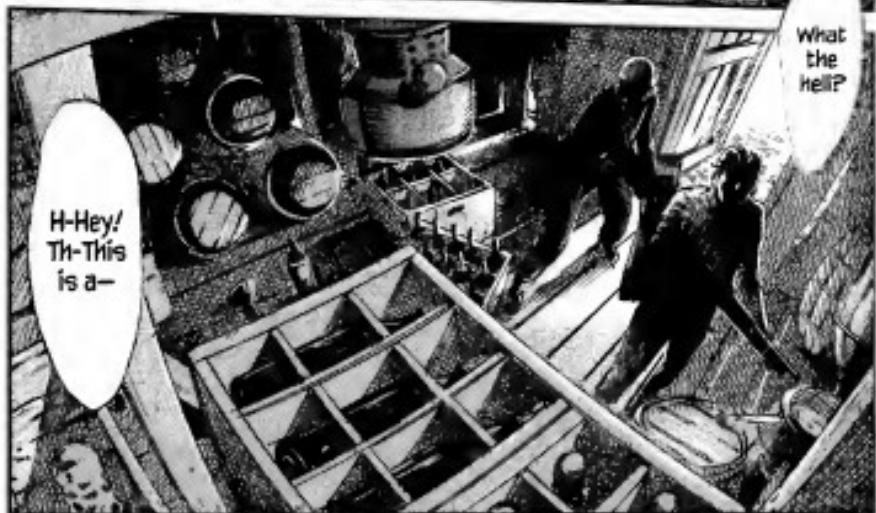
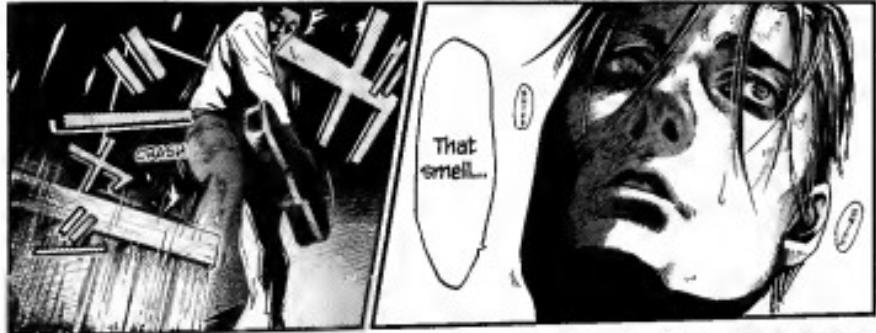












Huh?
That
you, Mr.
Jones?

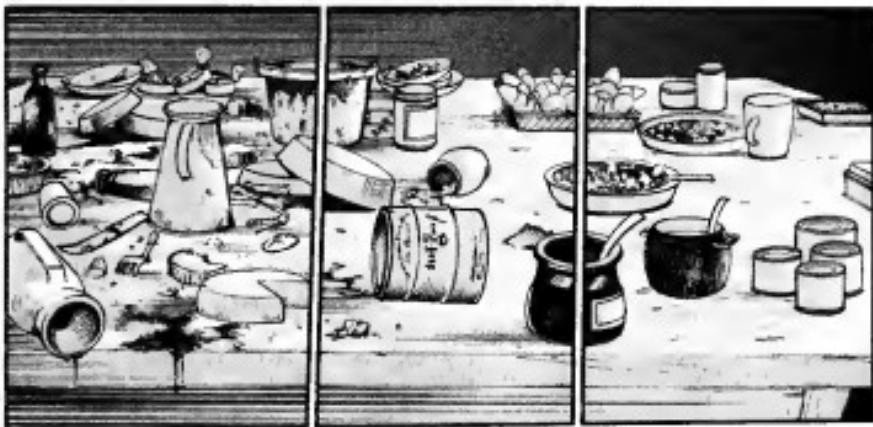
So...what's
going on?
It must be
urgent.

CREAK
+ " = "

How's Mr.
McDonald
these
days?

We still
got two
weeks
before our
delivery
date.

Huh?







I'm sure you're aware that drinking even a drop of booze in McDonald's town will get you the death penalty.

Mr. McDonald is a devout Christian who dedicated his life to helping rid society of the evils of alcohol. He's a true philanthropist.

Now it just doesn't make much sense that such a respectable man would have dealings with someone of your ilk. I must say it peaks my interest.



Mr. Boot-legger.

Maybe you could fill me in a little on just what you've got going on...





Jones... you know that's just superstition.



That old man sure is somethin'!

Ha, ha, ha...
"Carson Valley," huk?

He uses a two-bit trick like that to scare the townsfolk away?

You tell a soul about this...and you boys are dead...

Ha/
Same goes for you...

What do you say, R.J.? What do you think of McDonald's booze? "McDonald Brand Moonshine." The only booze that comes stamped with a prohibitionist's seal of approval, ha, ha, ha!

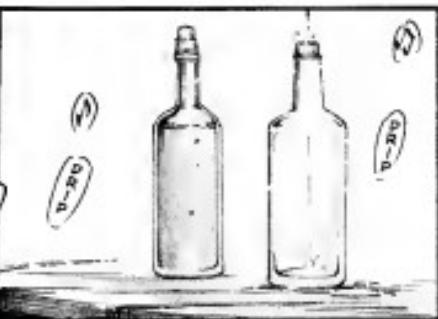
This one's for drinkin', and this one's for disinfectin'...okay?

I know you haven't seen booze in a while, but don't just drink it...use some to clean out your wounds.

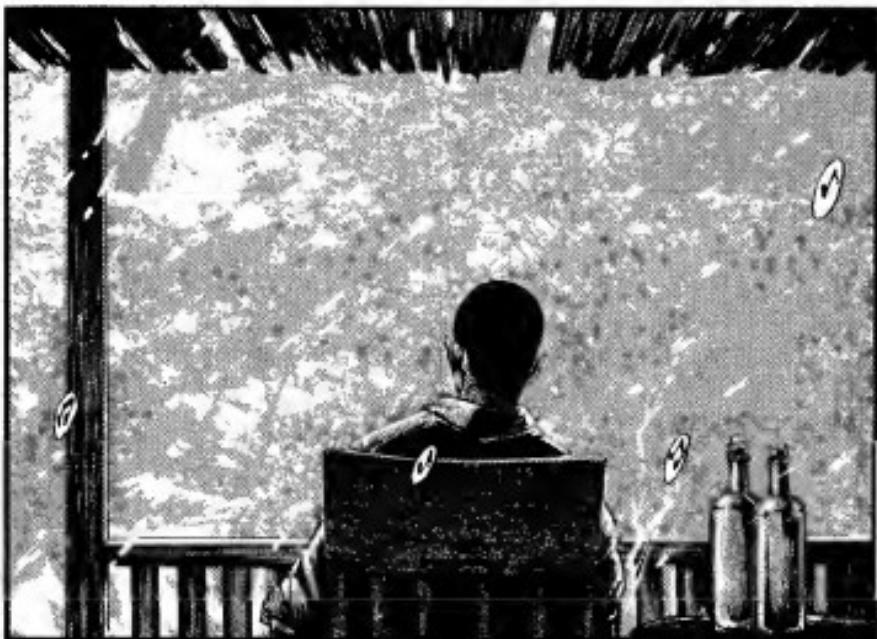
Hey,
R.J....

What a waste!
All this strong booze and a town that can't drink it!









You
may as
well give
up.

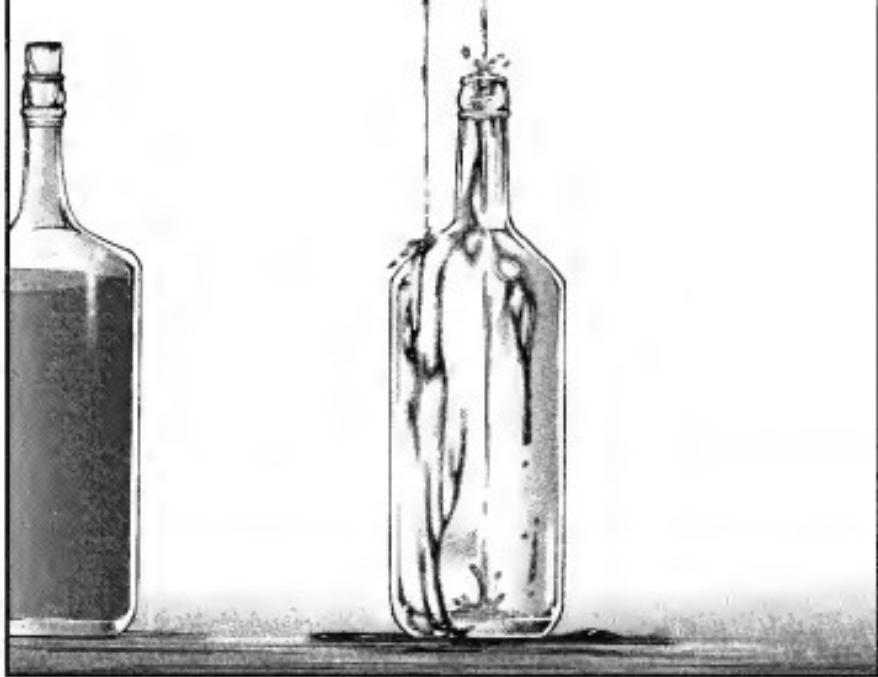
In other
words...

Thanks
for the
warning.

...I wanna
ask you. Do
you know
if around
these parts
there's a...

There's
just one
more
thing...









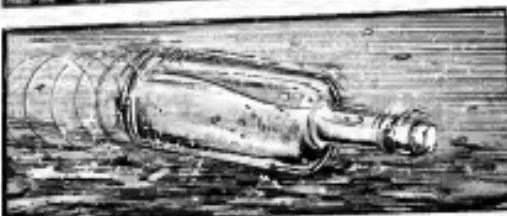








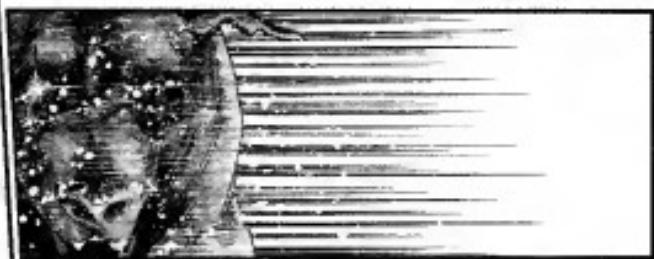
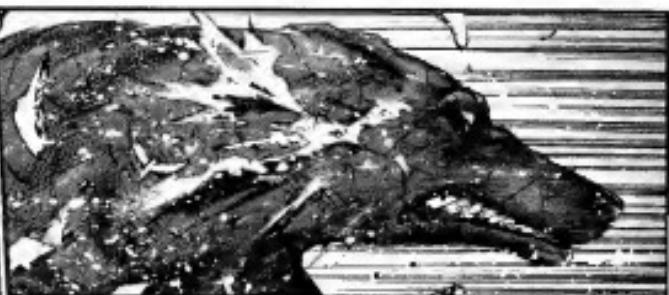












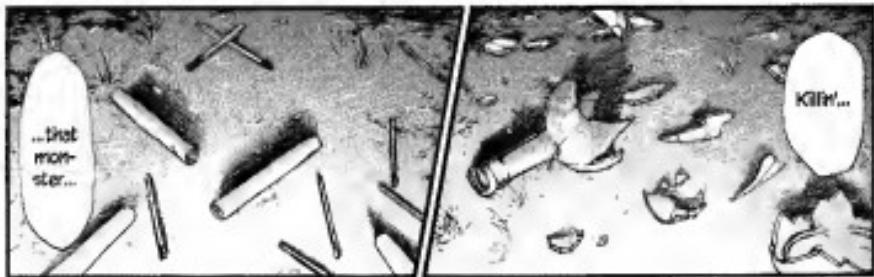








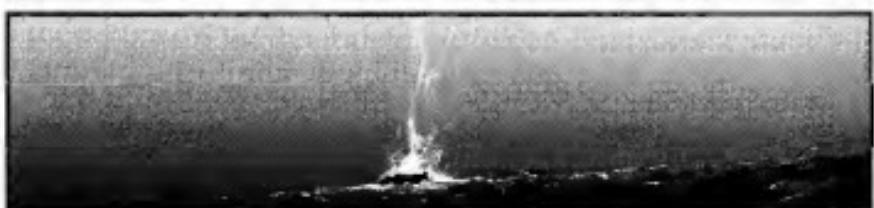




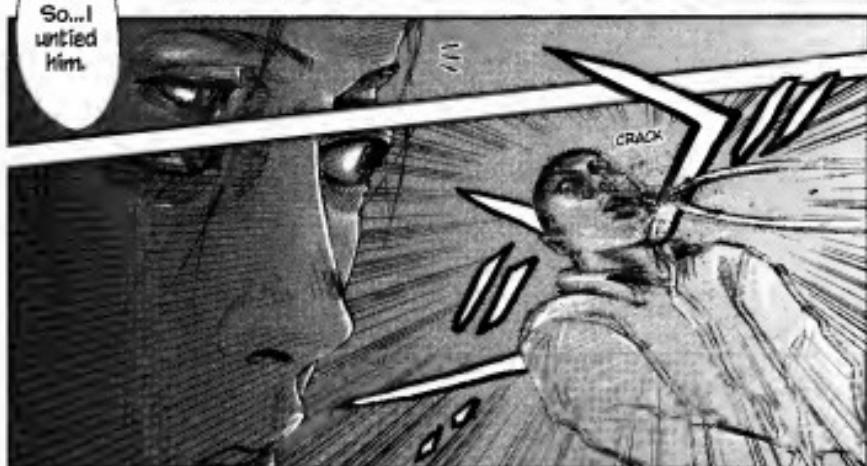
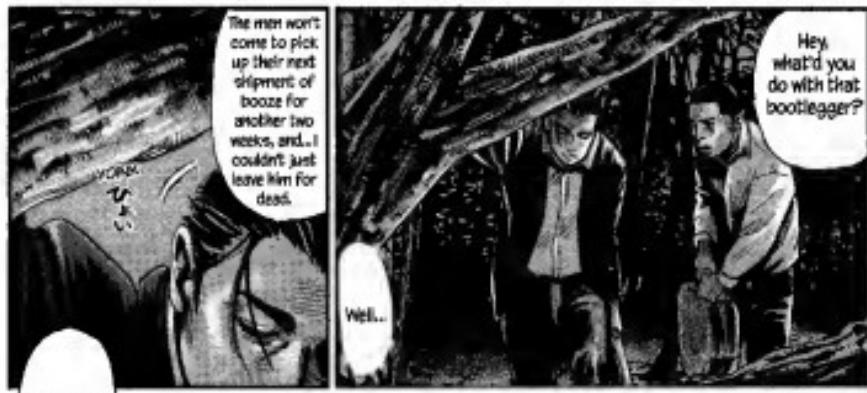


...with
nothin' but
booze and a
cigarette...
shii-it!













...I could
carry you
on my
back all
the way.

I ain't
such a
tough
guy
that...

Quit
talkin'
crazy!

...are you
sure...
It's really
there...
But...
is it...

Rh... RJ/
I see it!

It better
be
there...

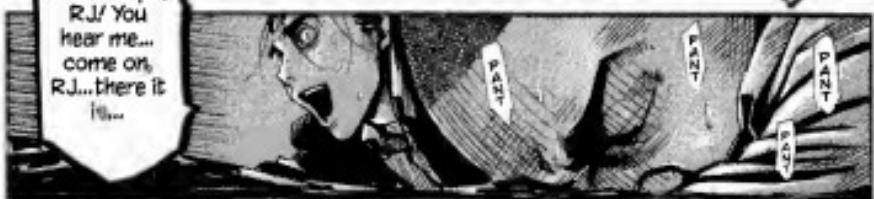
We're
saved!
Look!
It's
right in
front of
us!

Hey/
Get
up!

R
J!

H-
Hey!

THUD



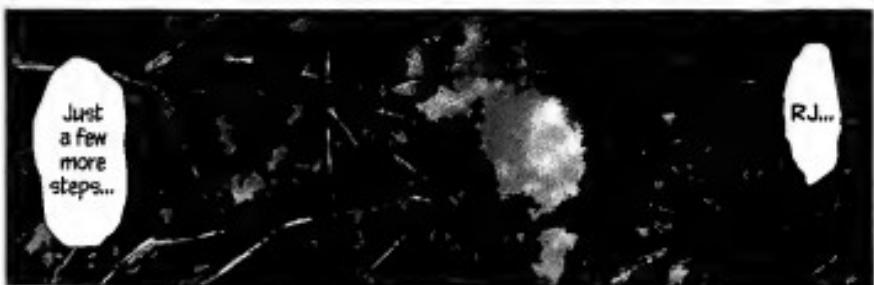
28/Hell Hound on My Trail, Part 7



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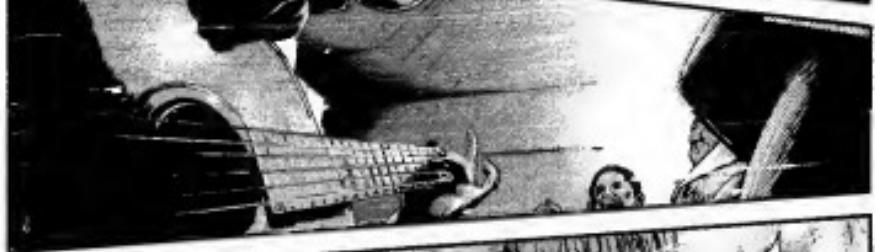














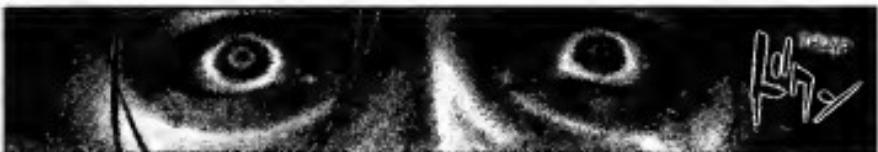














...your friend is laid up hurt in the mountains, and you want us negros to help him?

So... you're say-
ing...

Yes...
that's
right.

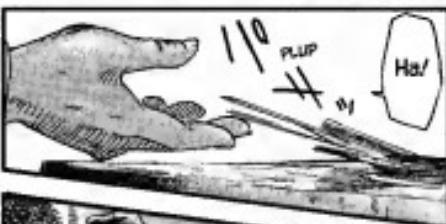
You buy a word this man's sayin'?

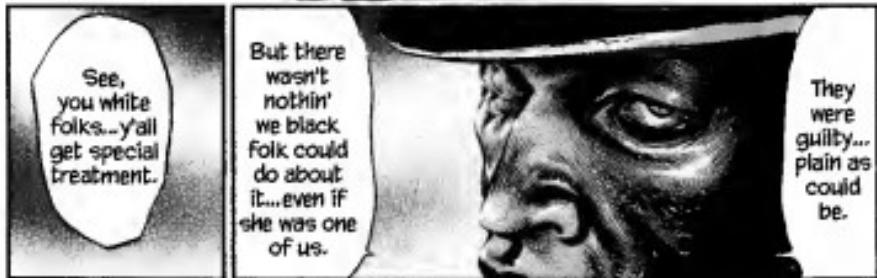
Vernon/
My friend...
he's black...no
white doctor'll
even see
him.

That man
ain't gon'
bring us
nothin'
:::

From
where
I can
see...







And you say your "friend" is one of us?

Tch...and who'd expect any different? The judge, the jury, all white folks. That ain't no trial...ain't nothin' but a joke.

Didn't take no time for them to find them four attackers not guilty. They wasn't punished or nuthin'.



They sure do know how to look out for each other...tch... makes me wanna puke.

Even scum of the earth rapists like them get protection from the other white folk...



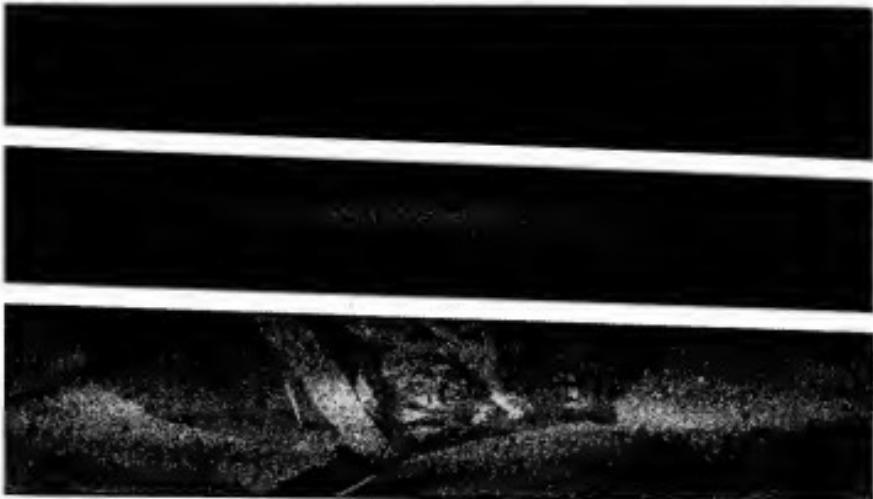
If he's friend to a white man, he sure as hell ain't one of us. You see...just cause his skin look like ours...that don't make him one of us...we Negros just don't have the luxury of thinkin' like that! No, sir we don't.



It was a white devil like you that took my eye.

I'll tell you one more thing...











WHISPER
Hell no! What do I know about your negro music?

Y-You even have any idea who Son and Charley are?

You gotta be kidding.

Didn't have much choice! If I hadn't said that, you and I would both be dead right now!

What the fuck? What're you doin' calling me a genius? You outta your mind?



Ain't no way I can play with my hand all wrapped up.

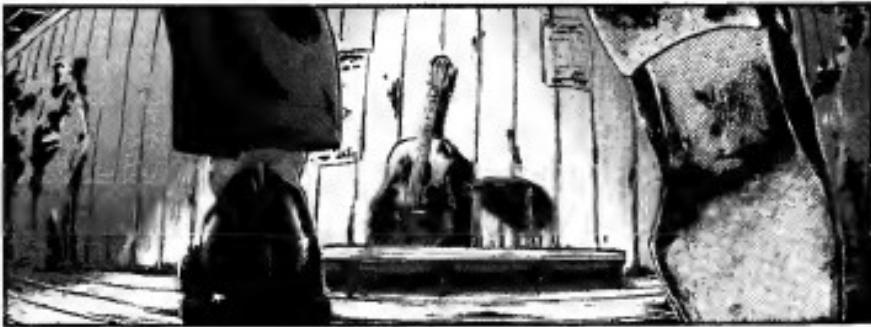
I'm grateful you hid it for me like this, but...

I can't!

Just shut up and play!

How the hell can I play guitar in front of all them with a hand like this?

Look...













Credits for the original Japanese edition:

Supervising Editor: Takashi 'Hotoke' Nagai

Firearms Consultant: Heihachiro Matsumoto

Special Thanks: Mitsuyoshi Azuma

Title Logo Design: Ken 'Razzo' Inatomi

Layout: Terumi 'Arten' Ishikawa

Comics Editor: Trabis 'Comic House'

Originally serialized in Kodansha's *Afternoon Monthly* manga magazine

Illustration Staff: Shintaro Suzuki, Takashi Heishiki, Akihiro Sugiyama,

Yasuhiro Torii, Souta Amada, Michiko Tatal

Written & Illustrated by Akira Hiramoto

The following section contains more information about the life and work of Robert Johnson. To read more about this legendary musician, please turn the book to the end and continue on, reading from left to right.



About the Author

Akira Hiramoto achieved great popularity in Japan with the humorous manga series *Chinless Gen and Me*, which has been serialized in *Weekly Young Magazine* since 1998. *Chinless Gen and Me* showed Hiramoto to be a master of comedy, but this uniquely versatile creator made an extraordinary change in artistic direction in 2004 with the dark and visionary *Me and the Devil Blues*. Both series are still continuing their successful runs.



Essay by Reichi Nakaido

I was in my teens when I first discovered the blues.

It was the early '60s, and (like 'Hototoku' Nagai and Makoto Ayukawa, who wrote the essays for *Me and the Devil Blues*, Book One) I heard my first blues riffs in the music of the British beat bands. The first actual blues album I ever got a hold of was by the Texan bluesman Lightnin' Hopkins. I didn't know a thing about blues back in those days, and there wasn't much information available. I must've found that album at an old used record store somewhere near Shinjuku. I probably just bought it because I liked the cover.

From that day on, I saved up all my lunch money, my allowance, and even did odd jobs so that I could buy as many blues albums as possible. I listened to all kinds of styles with no awareness whatsoever of what I was listening to... Delta blues, country blues, Texas blues etc, etc. The more I listened, the more absorbed I became. However, it was a bit later on that I first discovered Robert Johnson. I guess I just hadn't managed to come across his album in any of the record stores I frequented. But one fateful day, I wandered into a used record store called 'Time' in the Takadanobaba neighborhood of Shinjuku. (It was quite near my house.) That's where I finally happened upon the album called *The King of the Delta Blues Singers*. Now that I think about it, that was essentially the day I first 'met' Robert Johnson. It's a day worthy of commemoration and celebration. I brought it home, and I listened to it... and then listened to it again... and again... and again. This was the original version of the blues, and the mood was totally different from the modern blues of Clifton or the Stones. At the time, I had no idea of the depth and beauty of Johnson's lyrics. I was simply captivated by the mood of his music. As a musician who'd always played in bands, I was in disbelief that 'one man' alone could be capable of creating that sound, and yet there was no denying it.

Robert Johnson, Nagai, Ayukawa, and Azuma all touched on both the factual history and legend of his life in their essays in volumes 1 through 3. I imagine that those who have been reading this manga are diehard blues fans who have already learned all there is to know about Johnson's life, so I will leave that topic alone. It goes without saying that author Akira Hiramoto must also be a great fan of the blues. However, he differs from us (or at least me) in one important way. Hiramoto has taken the legend of Robert Johnson, and expanded it into a whole new story. I have tremendous respect for his creative power and the quality of his work! All three of the previous essays also make mention of this, but I must commend Hiramoto on his brilliant idea of taking the legend of Robert Johnson and turning it into an original new story!

I too once took a trip to Robert Johnson's 'homeland,' the Mississippi Delta. For me it was a sort of pilgrimage, a way to come into contact with the atmosphere, the mood, the spirit, and the legends of the blues that had so greatly impacted me from such an early age. Whenever I came upon a crossroads, I half expected Johnson to appear before me, guitar in hand. Throughout the trip, I was gripped with the feeling that I was wandering somewhere between reality and fantasy. This manga takes me right back to those days.

This is merely my own opinion, but I see Robert Johnson as existing on the same level as

Jimmy Hendrix, Vincent van Gogh, and Kenji Miyazawa. Each of these men transcended the medium of music, painting and writing respectively. These are men whose genius propelled them to another level. I believe that Robert Johnson transcended the blues and exists in the realm of genius. Perhaps it seems like I am over romanticizing Robert Johnson. Of course it may also be true that he was a petty scoundrel... just like us.

In Robert Johnson's lyrics, I can hear echoes of the psychedelic music of the 60s. Azuma used the term 'surrealist' to describe some of Johnson's lyrics in volume 3 and I would agree with his assessment. But how was Johnson able to invoke that psychedelic 'feeling' so many years before the psychedelic movement? This is a mystery of great depth. I have a feeling that it is this sense of mystery along with the magical quality of Johnson's persona that have so inspired Hiramoto. I hope that this work is one day published abroad. It will be wonderful if this book leads a reader to discover Robert Johnson and to develop an interest in blues.

The last scene of this volume, in the juke joint, leaves us holding our breath in suspense. The final panel shows Robert Johnson in a pose well known to all his fans. Who knows where this deep and fascinating tale will take us next.... Yeah! There is no other manga quite like this one.

Reichi Nakaido

Reichi Nakaido was born in 1950 in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward. He made his musical debut in 1972 as part of the folk duo Furudo, and then became a member of the band RC Succession. Currently, in addition to his solo work, he also performs with the Chabo Band and as part of the duo Ririan, along with Kouhei Tsuchiya. He is also a well-known writer and poet.

Essay....by Mitsuyoshi Azuma

Correct me if I'm wrong, but as far as I know *Me and the Devil Blues* is the only manga in the world that features a main character modeled after legendary bluesman Robert Johnson. I love listening to blues just as much as I love reading sci-fi novels but, it is certainly rare to find a sci-fi story in which the main character is a bluesman. The closest thing I can think of offhand is Jack Womack's *Terraplane*, in which Robert Johnson is actually not the lead character but does appear in the novel. The name 'Terraplane' came from Robert Johnson's song 'Terraplane Blues,' so the novel certainly could not have existed without RJ. However, as far as his role in the story, well, let's just say that if it were a film he would be the type of character that you hear mentioned in the story, but whose face you never see. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this novel is the hit man character who is a huge Robert Johnson fan. This story takes place in the future and the character is always listening to Johnson's music on an iPod-like device.

Although I have never read Naoki Urasawa's *20th Century Boys*, I have heard that it mentions the legend of Robert Johnson. One thing I'm sure of is that although there are numerous CD collections and biographies about RJ, there are very few fictional works about Johnson in the world.

That is why when I read the first volume of *Me and the Devil Blues* I was so shocked. It was clear that the character of RJ was based on Robert Johnson. Even the character of his deceased wife Virginia was based on a real woman. Willie Brown and Son House, whom RJ meets at the juke joint and the mysterious bluesman Ike (or is he the devil?) are all based on and named after people who really did have influence on Robert Johnson's life. This helps to give the first half of volume 1 a biographical feel. We see Johnson suffering through backbreaking labor as a farmhand and returning each evening to his family. He's not much of a guitar player, but he dreams of one day being a star. This is the story of a man who lived over eighty years ago in a world that was very much the polar opposite of our own, and yet thanks to Hiramoto's skill as an artist and editor Hotoke's supervision, this colorful world is brought to life before our very eyes.

The timeless question 'What is the blues?' is raised in volume 1 and debated by RJ, Son House, and Willie Brown. Can we Japanese ever truly understand the hardship that African Americans withheld under America's violently racist society? I have posed and pondered this question numerous times while in the recording studio or during a late night of drinking at the local pub, and it has often been taken up in music magazines as well. After my fifty years on this Earth and thirty-five years of appreciation of blues music, my opinion is this. 'We can understand only what we can understand.'

I'm not sure if you readers work a job where you have Saturday and Sunday off and then go back to work on Monday. I believe the Monday morning feeling of 'Ahhh, I don't wanna go to work' is universal and transcends all borders. There are numerous blues songs that make reference to this 'I hate Mondays' theme and any Japanese worker who hears this phrase will surely shout out in agreement 'That's right, that's the truth.' In that respect, the blues exists even within we Japanese.

Earlier I mentioned that Hiramoto's vivid depiction of Johnson truly 'brings him to life.' Through the character of RJ, Hiramoto has been able to create a story that allows Japanese readers like ourselves to identify with 'the blues.'

There may be some who say that the word blues should be transliterated into Katakana not as 'Buruuzu' but as 'Buruusu.' To me, this is really just a case of 'you say tomato I say tomahto.' I don't think there is much depth to this argument.

After RJ finishes work, on a Saturday his less-than-wholesome friend comes by and invites him to the juke joint. In today's world this would be one of those situations where your wife says 'You'll be home for dinner, right?' and you respond in the affirmative as you leave for work in the morning. The next thing you know, you're out drinking with your buddies until one a.m. and you're thinking 'Uh-oh, what am I in for when I get home?'

The phrase 'The blues come knockin' at my door' appears in the lyrics of numerous blues songs. Those words have a hint of surrealism about them that can almost come across as slightly unsettling. If we go back to our example above of the juke joint, this phrase 'The blues come knocking' could be pointing to the unwholesome friend who comes to 'the door' and invites you (or RJ) to go drinking. These 'blues' naturally lead to disaster (coming home at two a.m. and trying to come up with an excuse to tell the wife) but the effects are not all bad. Sitting with your friend and sharing hearty laughs over drinks happens precisely because you let the 'blues' affect you.

The words 'the blues' may only conjure up images of darkness, solitude, and ragged poverty, but there is also another side to the blues, one that may not be so readily acknowledged by the public. It would be misleading to speak of the blues without making reference to its other quality, that of pure fun. This image of 'fun' is clearly visible in Hiramoto's depiction of the hoppin' juke joint. Willie Brown and his buddies drinking booze and cutting loose, the young women dancing to the rhythm of the blues, the jokes overheard and the smiles seen on the faces of the patrons. These images all convey the joy and fun that is 'the blues.' Not all of Robert Johnson's recordings are about suffering, nor are they all of a serious nature. On the contrary many of his songs are very much like rock-and-roll songs with upbeat rhythms that get people's feet moving on the dance floor. The 'fun' aspect of blues music shines through Robert Johnson's recordings.

Perhaps I've been talking a bit too much about the blues. As I mentioned before this manga is a work of fiction. The story is based on a blend of legend and biography, but Hiramoto's tale really takes off when it begins to depart from reality. For example, one of the many wonders of the Robert Johnson legend is that Johnson disappeared for a few months and when he resurfaced he had become a phenomenal guitar player. Over the years numerous theories about what happened to Johnson during these months have been offered up. Some say he sold his soul to the devil, or was abducted by aliens, or that he hid away in the mountains. Some even say he wrestled with a bear, and that he spent his time away reading numerous books while carrying firewood upon his back. Hiramoto's work can be seen as making use of the theory that Johnson sold his soul to the devil. However, as I read the story I found myself excited by the realization that Johnson's disappearance could also be seen as a kind of science fiction-esque time slip. Furthermore, pairing RJ with the gangster character Clyde gives the story almost a 'road movie' like feeling. Surely if there were such

a thing as the Academy Awards of Manga, the character of Mr. McDonald would win best actor for his ability to move the story along with his perfect blend of creepiness and power. Meanwhile, throughout this third volume RJ is stuck in prison and his only hope is to rely on the pathetic Clyde and the indifferent Ike. Maybe he will somehow manage to break out of prison using a bottle-neck or perhaps the day before his lynching RJ will sing 'Come on in My Kitchen' and the sheriff, moved to tears by RJ's performance, will ultimately set him free. Perhaps Son House will be called on to perform at one of Mr. McDonald's parties, where he will win over the crowd and convince them to free RJ. In any case, as I read this I keep thinking 'Someone's gotta get out there and help save RJ!' Judging by the look in his eye, it seems Clyde has a plan up his sleeve. No doubt RJ will soon bust out of jail and their next adventure will begin. I can hardly wait for volume 4.

Mitsuyoshi Azuma

Mitsuyoshi Azuma—Company worker/musician. Born in 1956. While still a student he was invited to join the band of harpist Kotchiro Imoo. He quit working with bands temporarily when he got a job. He later formed the band 'Mitsuyoshi Azuma and the Swinging Boppers' at a school reunion and has never been able to quit. His most recent album is *Seven and a decade* (Victor)